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BUREAU OF
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CURRENT
ANALYSES

(U) CHINA RELAXES CURBS ON STUDENTS GOING ABROAD

(S/NF) Summary

In still another reflection of the liberalizing atmosphere being fostered by Deng Xiaoping and his reformist successors, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, China's State Council recently issued regulations relaxing the approval process for applications to study abroad. The new regulations are particularly more lenient for students on private funding or foreign scholarships.

The effect of the regulations on enrollments in the US remains uncertain and depends on how both countries choose to handle increases in applications. It is possible, however, that one result will be a significant increase in Chinese students coming to the US, especially those funded by US relatives or scholarships.

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Privately Funded Students Now Encouraged

(S/NF) Since 1978, well in excess of 33,000 Chinese students have gone overseas to study; some 10,000-13,000 are currently in the US. Chinese policy has been to encourage promising students and scholars to seek PRC-funded scholarships, and late last year the Chinese Government announced that it would increase by one-third the number of such awards.

(S/NF) The use of private funding for such study, however, has been a controversial issue in China, with some in the leadership fearing that privately sponsored students abroad would be less controllable and less likely to return upon the

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completion of their studies. In 1982-83, Chinese Government policy actively discouraged the granting of permission for students who were not funded by the government to study abroad, and the number of such students going to the US dropped by half. Although some press reports indicate that only about 7,000 non-state-sponsored students have been permitted to leave since 1978, informed observers believe there may be that many in the US alone.

(S/NF) The leadership apparently now sees the use of private funding as an effective means to increase the number of Chinese studying in foreign institutions of higher education and has decided to tap non-governmental sources of funding despite the risk that some students or scholars may not return. The willingness--associated with Deng and party boss Hu since the late 1970s--to accept the possibility that some of China's "best and brightest" would choose to leave the country is another manifestation of the reformers' momentum in pushing policies past their weakened, more conservative opponents.

(S/NF) Under the new system, those with assured scholarships or private support may apply for permission to study abroad regardless of school record, age, or length of employment. A passport will be issued within three months of the date of application, according to a recent briefing for Chinese students in the US given by a State Council official. Those studying abroad will have their positions reserved at home but will not receive a salary. An overseas stay of as much as five years can be credited to job seniority in the student's Chinese work unit.

(U) Upon graduation, returning students will be assigned jobs commensurate with their newly acquired skills, according to the regulations. Those who failed to graduate will also be assigned jobs according to their capabilities, and those studying for short periods are assured of permission to pick up their studies upon their return.

(S/NF) PhDs To Benefit Too

The regulations reportedly also include greater latitude for holders of doctoral degrees. Upon assignment to their first job, PhD holders will serve a "floating period" of three years, during which time they can apply to other research facilities. If accepted, they can quit their original assignment at the end of the "floating period" and be reassigned to the new unit.

PhDs will also be permitted to travel abroad on sabbatical every four years for periods not to exceed one year, [redacted] Such scholars engaging in foreign [redacted] research would be eligible for government travel funds and would

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continue to receive their salary. The prospects of being able to travel abroad on periodical sabbaticals may also serve as an incentive for Chinese who study abroad to return home.

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